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ELTWeekly

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TARUN PATEL



BHASKAR PANDYA



KAUSHAL KOTADIA



RAJESH BHARVAD

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WORD OF THE WEEK

WORD: plumply • \PLUMP-lee\ • adverb

MEANING : in a wholehearted manner and without hesitation or circumlocution
:forthrightly

EXAMPLE: Having taken offense at the remark, Sir Jeffrey plumply asked the man if his insult was intentional.

To know more about 'plumply', please visit <http://www.merriam-webster.com>

To leave your comment, click this link: <http://eltweekly.com/more/2009/10/36-word-of-the-week-plumply-%e2%80%a2-plump-lee/>

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VIDEO: The London School of English

Hi there,

This time – I am going off the track. Here is a video that provides information on The London School of English.

The London School of English is the world's oldest accredited English language school providing Business and Professional courses at the Holland Park Gardens Centre and General and Examinations courses at Westcroft Square.

I hope you will like the video

Watch the video at <http://eltweekly.com/more/2009/10/35-video-the-london-school-of-english/>

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ELT Expert Interview: Interview with Dr. Atanu Bhattacharya

Hi friends, today we have with us Dr. Atanu Bhattacharya, a dynamic English Language Teacher working with H M Patel Institute of English Training & Research, Vallabh Vidyanagar – Gujarat as a Reader.



On his credit Dr. Bhattacharya has several research papers focusing on English Literature and use of ICT in ELT. He has conducted various seminars and workshops on integration of Technology in ELT.

His words are definitely going to bring in some learning

So, here is the interview:

Tarun Patel: Hello Sir, welcome to ELTWeekly

Atanu Bhattacharya: Hi Tarun, thanks for inviting me on board.

Tarun Patel: Sir, How long have you been teaching English in India?

Atanu Bhattacharya: Since 1997, that is about, 12 years now.

Tarun Patel: Why did you decide to become an English language teacher?

Atanu Bhattacharya: Choice, primarily but also because I always found the subject interesting. However, I was not an English language teacher to begin with. I started my career teaching literature. However, it would be utterly wrong to distinguish between the two since one cannot exist without the other.

Tarun Patel: Which writer / researcher has had the most influence over the way you understand learning and teaching?

Atanu Bhattacharya: Many of them to begin with. I was very interested in theory and the earliest theorists that I was influenced by were Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. Later, I got interested in Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari as well as Jean Baudrillard

– all postmodern theorists. In the field of ELT, MAK Halliday, Widdowson, Michael McCarthy and Ronald Carter were major influences.

Tarun Patel: How did you find your first teaching job?

Atanu Bhattacharya: I applied for it and got selected to teach in a Government College in a small and remote town in Arunachal Pradesh called Tezu. It was quite interesting (I mean the place) and I really enjoyed my stay there since I did not have much to teach(: The place was beautiful surrounded by snow-capped mountains.

Tarun Patel: What are the major challenges for an English teacher while teaching in Gujarat / India?

Atanu Bhattacharya: Depends on where you are teaching. In an urban set-up, I guess that you would get students who would have the basic competence in the language. In rural areas, you need to start with the language itself. And, of course, there is this great divide between literature and language in most of our formal education system where students get a degree called BA in English but there is hardly any English that is taught to them except some heavy doses of canonical English literature. The challenge for the teacher is to bridge the gap that exists between these two. Thankfully, it is reducing now.

Tarun Patel: What have you learned from being an English teacher?

Atanu Bhattacharya: Many things but the most important one being ‘Never underestimate your students since they are much better than you are’

Tarun Patel: What advice would you give to someone thinking of becoming an English teacher?

Atanu Bhattacharya: The road ahead is difficult but with perseverance and love and dedication and commitment nothing can not be done. It sounds a bit of a cliché but the feeling that you get when you have achieved that one success is indescribable.

Tarun Patel: What most interests you about ELT at the moment?

Atanu Bhattacharya: Use of technology to enhance language learning. We can no more ignore it and keep it out of our classrooms.

Tarun Patel: How do you see the role of the EL teacher evolving over the next 5 – 10 years?

Atanu Bhattacharya: To begin with, the teachers would have to be equipped with the use of technology since we would soon have classes where the students are better equipped than teachers technologically speaking. Secondly, the methods of teaching have to be upgraded to be in tune with recent developments in language teaching.

Tarun Patel: Please share some tips on becoming a 'better' English teacher.

Atanu Bhattacharya: The role of the teacher needs to be shifted from a knowledge-provider to a knowledge-facilitator. Students need to speak more in the classroom since that is exactly where learning takes place. Using, therefore, pair or group interactive activities should take precedence over a one-way lecture mode.

Tarun Patel: Thanks very much Sir for agreeing for this interview. We look forward to have you on ELTWeekly again, very soon

Atanu Bhattacharya: Thanks Tarun, All the best!

Dear readers, if you wish ask any question to Dr. Bhattacharya or have some messages for him, please leave them as comments. They will be forwarded to Dr. Bhattacharya.

****ELTWeekly** would like to thank **Dr. Atanu Bhattacharya** for agreeing for this interview.

To leave your comment, click this link: <http://eltweekly.com/more/2009/10/36-interview-with-dr-atanu-bhattacharya/#comments>

RESEARCH ARTICLE: Language and Culture

by Mahsa Kia

Introduction

Culture is the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties especially by education. (Webster dictionary)

The national centre for cultural competence defines culture as an "integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to the succeeding generation. (Good, Sockalingam, Brown & Jones, 2000)

It is emergent to language learners to be aware of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. Behaviors and intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own speech community may be perceived differently by the members of the target language. As a matter of fact, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior.

This paper concerns with the culture in relation with language teaching and learning. In addition, it focuses on the role of the learners and teachers to be effective ones and develop their cultural competence.

The necessity of culture in language learning

To speak a language well, one has to be able to think in that language, and thought is extremely powerful. A person's mind is in the centre of his identity, so if a person thinks in French, one might say that he has, in a way, almost taken on a French identity. That is the power and the essence of a language. Language is culture. Language is the soul of the country and people who speak it.

It is clear that the terminology used by a culture primarily reflects that culture's interests and concerns. For instance, Indians in Canada's north west territories typically have at least 13 terms for different types and conditions of snow, while most non-skiing native southern Californians use only 2 terms –ice and snow. That does not mean that the English language has 2 terms. Quite the contrary, there are many more English words that refer to different states of frozen water, such as blizzard, dusting, flurry, frost,... the point is that these terms are rarely if ever used by people living in a tropical or subtropical regions because they rarely encounter frozen water in any form other than ice cubes.

On the other hand, without the study of culture, teaching second language is inaccurate and incomplete. For L2 students, language study seems senseless if they know nothing about the people who speak the target language or the country in which the target language is spoken. Acquiring a new language means a lot more than the manipulation of syntax and lexicon. According to Bada(2000,101)"the need for cultural literacy in ELT arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speaker."Moreover, nowadays the L2 culture is presented as an interdisciplinary core in many L2 curricula designs and textbooks.(Sysoyev&Donelson2002)

Socio-cultural theory

The social process of interaction (through language, as well as other systems and tools such as gestures, narratives, technologies) mediates the construction of knowledge and leads to the individual's development of a framework for making sense of experience that is congruent with the cultural system in which the learner and learning are located. It is through this social and cultural process that students are socialized to act, communicate and be in ways that are culturally appropriate to the groups in which they participate to as members, and through which identities are formed.

Within socio-cultural theories, development occurs twice: firstly in the process of social interaction (that is, on an interpersonal plane) and then within the mind of the individual (that is on an intrapersonal plane). Language is integral to learning in that it is the major means by which we make and share meanings with ourselves and with others, and by which we negotiate social relationships and social values. It is language that makes it possible for people to objectify and conceptualize themselves in the world- to give names to experiences, and make sense of the environment, objects, experiences, events and

interactions. In short, language is central to the process of conceiving meaning, which is integral to learning.

The socio-cultural perspective on second language learning, based on the work of Vygotsky(1978) highlights that all learning, including language learning, is based on social interaction with more proficient others, on an interpersonal and intrapersonal plane as described above. Through the concept of the zone of the proximal development, it highlights that language learning is developmental. The characteristic of prior knowledge is very important. It recognizes that new learning is built on prior learning- that is, the ideas and concepts that students bring to learning. Teachers work with these preconceptions in order to facilitate learning.

Motivation: the effect of motivation in the study of L2 has been proved by experts like Gardner and Lambert(1959,1965,1972). In achieving high motivation, culture classes does have a great roles because learners like culturally based activities such as singing, dancing, role playing, doing research on countries and people, etc. The study of culture increases learners' not only curiosity about and interest the target countries but also their motivation. For example, when some professors introduced the cultures of the L2s they taught, the learner's interests in those classes increased a lot and the classes based on cultured become to be preferred to more highly than traditional Classes.(kiato,2000)

Communicative competence in L2: Culture enhances communicative competence in L2. Cultural competence falls in the category of pragmatic aspect of communicative of the members of a culture, and thus behaves in a way that would be understood by members of the culture in the intended way. It, therefore, involves understanding of all aspects of a culture, but particularly the social structure, the values and beliefs of the people and the way things are assumed to be done. Lado (1957) argued that lack of cultural competence in the target language would surely lead to transfer from the native language. Consequently L2 students would express idiosyncratic utterances leading to inappropriate utterances even through the grammatical structures may be appropriate.

The process of teaching

Teaching a language is not giving some information about the structure, vocabulary, idiom and linguistics, but it should include cultural points.

The study of culture should begin on the very first day of class and should continue every day thereafter. From the first day of class teachers should have prepared a cultural island in their classrooms. Posters, pictures, maps and signs are essential in helping students develop a mental image. Assigning students foreign names from the first day can heighten student interest. Short presentations on a topic of interest with appropriate pictures or slides add to this mental image. Start student off by making them aware of the influence of various foreign cultures in this country. Introduce students to the borrowed words in the language or the place-names of our country.

Byram (1989,42) points out that the cultural experiences that teachers can provide for the learners in the tutored setting are, at best, vicarious and argues that it would be misguided to teach as if learners can acquire foreign cultural concepts, values and behaviors, as if they were a *tabula rasa*.

Teachers must allow students to observe and explore cultural interactions from their own perspectives to enable them to find their own voices in the second language speech community.

According to Tomalin & Stempleski(1993:7-8), there are seven goals of cultural instructions:

1. to help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviors.
2. to help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.
3. to help student to become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations in target language.
4. to help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
5. to help students to develop their ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
6. to help students to develop the necessary skills to locate the organize information about the target culture.

7. to stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

Nelson Brooks has identified five meanings of culture: growth; refinement; fine arts; patterns of living' and the total way of life. He believes that patterns of living should receive the major emphasis in the classroom. It is patterns of living that are the least understood, meaning of culture as culture 4 and defines it as follows:

“Culture 4 (patterns of living) refers to the individuals' role unending kaleidoscope of life situations of every kind and the rules and models for attitude and conduct in them. By reference to these models, every human being, from infancy onward, justifies the world to himself as best he can, associates with those around him, and relates to the social order to which he is attached.’ (Brooks 1991,210)

From the point of view of language instruction, culture 4 can be divided into formal culture and deep structure. Formal culture, sometimes referred to as “culture with a capital C”, includes the humanistic manifestations and contributions of a foreign culture: art; music; literature; architecture; technology; politic. However, with this way of looking at culture, we often lose sight of the individual.

Deep structure, or “culture with small c”, focuses on the behavioral patterns or lifestyles of the people: when and what they eat; how they make a living; the attitudes they express towards friends and members of their families; which expressions show approval or disapproval. In this sense, culture is a body of ready- made solutions to the problems encountered by the group. It is a cushion between man and his environment. If we provide our students only with a list of facts of history or geography and a list of lexical items, we have not provided them with an intimate view of what life is really like in the target culture.

Kordes (1991,288) reports that after 3 years of French study, including time in country one third of 112 students in a sixth German Oberstufe remained monocultural, small minority at level of transculturation, in which they achieved some degree of identification with the foreign culture. Recognizing that cultural proficiency may be more difficult to assess than linguistic proficiency, Kramersch (1991,220) notes that even in the case of study-abroad experiences, the evidence pointing to the development of cross-cultural understanding or cross-cultural personality development is lacking. According to Kramersch (1993,234) even individuals who immigrate to a new country and spend the remainder of their lives as active

participants in the new cultural setting often report the feeling of not” really to the host culture,” but of being situated on its borders.

Byram (1991,19) for one, believes that the goal of culture instruction can not be to replicate the socialization process experienced by natives of the culture, but to develop intercultural understanding. Kordes(1991,302) expresses a similar view in claiming that even though a foreign language, intercultural learning is feasible to at least some degree. Kramsch (1993) proposes that in the classroom setting it is possible to foster the formation of what she calls a third culture conceived of as the intersection of multiple discourses rather than as a reified body of information to be intellectualized and remembered. Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) present the results of a classroom study that shows that it is possible for learners to develop positive attitudes toward the cultural perspective of members of different speech communities as a result of an instructional program that brings learners into meaningful interaction with members of the second culture.

The role of the learner

Necessarily, students can not master the language unless they have mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.

Effective communication more than a matter of language proficiency, but successful communication hardly ever takes place unless second language users have obtained a kind of cultural competency of the language they use. One’s meaningful cross-cultural communication depends on the achievement of abilities to understand different modes of thinking and living, as they are embodied in the language to be learnt, and to merge and mediate between different modes present in any specific interaction. This mode of understanding can be labeled as ‘intercultural communicative competence.’

Through intercultural language learning, students engage with and learn to understand and interpret human communication and interaction in increasingly sophisticated ways. They do both as participants in communication and as observers who notice, describe, analyze and interpret ideas, experiences and feeling shared when communicating with others. In doing so, they engage with interpreting their own and others meanings, with each experience of participation and reflection leading to a greater awareness of self in relation to others. The ongoing interactive exchange of meanings, and the reflection on both the meanings exchanged and the process of interaction, are an integral part of life in our world. As such, intercultural language learning is best understood not as something to be added to teaching

and learning but rather something that is integral to the interactions that already (and inevitably) takes place in the classroom and beyond.

Language learners need to be aware, for example, of the culturally appropriate ways for addressing people, greetings, expressing needs, and agree or disagree with someone. They should know that behaviors and intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own speech community may be perceived differently by members of the target language speech community. They have to understand that, in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behavior.

If learners are particularly lucky, they get a chance to a foreign country to immerse themselves in the culture of the country.

However, most of the learners have no chance to spend time in a foreign country: therefore, learners should do some useful techniques:

1. it is very effective to contact with native speakers of the language in some classes. (native teachers)
2. they can find some culturally similarities and differences between their language and target language and discuss this with their classmates.
3. it is necessary to work with authentic materials of the target language:

Films: films offer learners a chance to observe behaviors which are not in texts.

It is possible to watch, feelings, gestures, behaviors.

Internet: via the internet, we can easily search anything any time.

Newspapers and magazine: newspapers offer daily news. They are the best sources to connect learners with language and culture such as, interviews and advertisements.

4. learners can study the history and identity of the people of the language and get familiar with their customs and way of thinking.

5. the role-play must take place after an exposure to authentic conversation in a classroom. They observe the role play and try to identify the reason for the miscommunication.

6. one of the best way to be aware of cultural information is common proverbs in the target language. They will focus on how the proverbs and different from or similar to proverbs in their own language.

7. talks and discussions may be suitable for giving information to students about culture in classes.

8. an effective way for students to learn about target language and culture is to speak in an authentic way. For example, they can call a hotel and get some information about rooms, facilities.....

Conclusion

Understanding the nature of the relationship between language and culture is central to the process of learning another language. In actual language use, it is not the case that it is only the forms of language that convey meaning. It is language in its culture context that creates meaning: creating and interpreting meaning is done within a cultural framework.

Learning to communicate in an additional language involves developing and awareness of the ways in which culture interrelates with language whenever it is used.

Taking an inter cultural perspective in language teaching and learning involves more than developing knowledge of other people and places. It means that all human beings are shaped by their cultures and that communicating across cultures involves accepting both one's own culturally conditioned nature and that of others and the ways in which these are at play in communication.

To get this goal, teachers and learners should play their effective role in the classrooms. The effective techniques were introduced to the learners in the text.

On the other hand, teachers must allow students to observe and explore cultural interactions from their own perspectives to enable them to find their own voices in the language speech community. In fact, without the study of culture, teaching foreign language is inaccurate and incomplete.

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****ELTWeekly** would like to thank **Mahsa Kia** for contributing this article.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE: The Use of L1 in Teaching English

by **Ms Daisy**

The issue of using L1 (mother tongue) in teaching English has become debatable, in fact there are no clear guidelines on it. Most of the teachers feel that use of L1 should be minimized and feel guilty if they use it frequently. But if asked why they feel so, it is difficult for them to answer.

The general assumption is that English should be learnt through English, like one learns mother tongue and not by using L1. But the idea that learner should learn English like a native speaker does, or try to think in English is an inappropriate and unachievable aim. English is a world lingua franca and what we should be aiming for today is to make our learners speakers of English. Moreover a dangerous side- effect of banishing L1 from the English classroom is the implication that somehow the learners' mother tongue is inferior, or does not count, thus discriminating against the learners' linguistic identity.

The only valid argument in my opinion, in favor of minimizing (not banishing) L1 use is that over-use of L1 lessens the time available for English use in the classroom. Obviously we want our students to have maximum exposure to English in our lessons. But this is possible only by limiting L1 use, not banishing it altogether. Insisting on using English even when students does not understand what is being said may lead to the message it does not matter if you do not understand' or the morale-lowering assumption by learners, 'I don't understand English'.

This leads to the belief that use English as long as the students understand it well enough to get the message, and insist on their using it as long as they can get their message across. Otherwise, allow L1 use. Some purposes of L1 use might be: for explaining difficult grammar, for giving instructions which might not be understood in English, for checking comprehension for saving time which can then be used for communicative work in English.

Now the question is how to decide when to use English and when to use L1? It is essentially a question of professional judgment. Many times during a lesson we need to ask ourselves:

should I insist on English here, or should I use mother tongue? It is necessarily a split second decision. The answer will depend essentially on how easy or difficult the message will be to convey and understand in English.

Another possibility which emerges out of this whole debate is of using L2 and then L1. The solution of saying things in English and then translating into L1 incidentally is not a solution at all. Students learn very quickly that they do not need to listen to the English as the mother tongue version is coming up, and this strategy simply gets them used to ignoring the English. The decision as to which language to use in any specific case has to be made, you can not ignore it. These doses not mean that there is no place for translation.

In fact the issue of L1 in L2 teaching is connected to some more pertinent issues. A few of such issues are:

1. Can mother tongue(s) be used in a multi-lingual classroom?
2. What is the place of L1 in explaining vocabulary?
3. Is it useful to compare/contrast L1 and English?
4. Can L1 help error correction?
5. Can translation be useful in the English classroom
6. Can/should L1 be used in classroom management?

One of the opinions on the issue is that L1 must be used only when a teacher or a speaker in a conversation is at a loss for words and when the conversation is stuck in a rut. Certainly, natural acquisition through immersion in the home, may be through TV Channels etc but its success depends on two main factors: (a) a lot of opportunities for exposure, (b) sheer time, and ready availability of TV and other means and a lot of motivation. For a lot of teachers, teaching large heterogeneous classes of unmotivated learners, neither of these conditions exists. In such a situation mother tongue can substantially assist learning.

Most of us would agree that extensive use of L1 does not help any one, including the teachers themselves. However I do believe that it can be useful in limited doses in the classroom and especially for lower levels. Apart from the purely technical aspects of language acquisition, there are other factors at work in the classroom. Among the most important is the development of a good rapport between students and teacher. This is made

easier if the student can express themselves, at least during the first stage of learning a language, in their own tongue. Otherwise students may feel unwilling to express any queries they have or avoid contributing to the lesson at all.

Another interesting situation is, when the teacher does not know the L1, or learners speak different languages. In such a situation a teacher can make use of another language that they both know, in order to facilitate understanding. The use of a stronger language to facilitate a weaker language. Moreover learners can help each other by translating things when the teacher can not do. About explaining grammar, there are various opinions; whether to explain it in L1, whether to explain it at all, how much detail to use. The only succinct reply to that is to use L1 occasionally to clarify certain grammatical rules.

Teaching L2 the same way, learners learned their L1, this idea is not justifiable because in a school learning situation, we can not give learners the kind of exposure, motivation and number of factors which a child has when learning mother tongue. You should have clear rules in the mind, when L1 is not allowed and stick to your drawn boundaries. Although there are some valid reasons for using L1 in the classroom, it is often resorted to when teachers worry that their learners won't understand. I think we must trust our learners more and give them the chance to experiment. Of course our attitude to errors matter a lot in this regard.

The most important thing a teacher can do in the classroom is to create the condition in which the learner feels that he/she belongs. We must understand that in learning a foreign/second language we are doing more than simply absorbing a body of knowledge, in fact we are dealing with students' sense of identity, especially in case of adult learners, whose sense of self has fully developed. It is useful to use L1 in the classroom, by sandwiching some expressions or words in L2 with L1 and it works wonderfully.

There is no need to feel guilty when using L1. It is a point of professional judgment and this is especially so when the teacher is not able to convey ideas in the L2. The question of using L1 or not has not been answered satisfactorily to date. However two trends appear; (a) the idea of translating to the L1 difficult words and parts of any text teachers are working with where spending time on them would be a waste of effort and confusing, (b) the teachers using the L1 to give instructions or explanations of the procedures of the lesson and its rationale, so that aims and objectives of the lesson are clear and achievable. How about incorporating texts written in L1 into the L2 lessons? It could bring out differences between the two languages and as such help overcome kinds of fossilization that can occur because of

other kinds of teaching where the differences are so great that the differences do not lead itself to learners making the kinds of mental adjustment that are required.

Conclusion: There is no rule that you should never use L1 in English lessons, nor on the other hand is there any excuse for using L1 most of the time. Like many other teaching strategies, the use of L1 involves rapid on-your-feet decision making: is it worth switching to L1 at this point? Or would it be better to stay with English? We should finally free ourselves from the misconceptions and try to appreciate the existing alliance between the L1 and L2. Our ultimate aim should be to have students who are proficient L2 users rather than deficient L1 speakers.

About Daisy

Ms Daisy, a poet by nature is an Assistant Professor of English in BPS Women University, Khanpur Kalan (Sonipat) Haryana. She has been teaching undergraduate students for the last 15 years. Besides being a seasoned teacher, she is also engaged in training school teachers in effective teaching of English. Also, she has jointly been awarded a Major Research Project by UGC on teaching of English in Haryana. She has presented many research papers at National Conferences and has published three text books. She is pursuing Ph.D in English.

****ELTWeekly** would like thank **Ms Daisy** for contributing this article.

To leave your comment, click this link: <http://eltweekly.com/more/2009/10/36-research-article-the-use-of-l1-in-teaching-english-by-daisy-n/#respond>

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Book of the The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language

by David Crystal

Editorial Reviews

From Library Journal

Crystal, an author, lecturer, and BBC broadcaster on language, here approaches English with the same combination of scholarly seriousness and inviting visual presentation that made his Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language (LJ 5/1/88) so successful. This large, lively, and lavishly illustrated volume is divided into six broad topics that cover the English language's history, vocabulary, grammar, writing and speech systems, usage, and acquisition. Within these major topics, the book is divided into logical subtopics and finally into the basic unit of the text—the two-page spread. Nearly every individual subject is treated without turning a page, and how these pages are packed! The clear and spirited text is stunning, enhanced with over 500 illustrations, making this a particularly rich reference work and a browser's dream. The history part consists of chronological chapters that trace the language's development. It offers a fascinating treatment of the growth of English during Shakespeare's time as well as its adaptation to the needs of international trade and late 20th-century technology. Crystal is attuned to the diversity of English usage around the world, providing a variety of wide-ranging quotations, photographs, newspaper clippings, poems, ads, and cartoons. The text treats controversial topics such as black English, word and place origins, regional English, dialect, the U.S. movement to make English the official language, politically correct language, and the future. The book's layout, three indexes, and glossary will make it useful both at the reference desk and in the circulating collection. Crystal has created an attractive and readable work for the lay reader as well as the specialist. For most academic, public, and school libraries.

Paul D'Alessandro, Portland P.L., Me.

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From Booklist

This attractive resource is organized thematically in segments covering the history of the English language (Old English, Middle English, Modern English, English in different parts of the world); English vocabulary (its nature, structure, sources, etymology, and the dimensions of the lexicon); English grammar (structure of words and sentences, definitions of the main branches of grammar); spoken and written English; English usage (varieties of discourse and regional, social, and personal usage variations); and how people learn English and new ways to study English.

Appendixes include a glossary, a list of symbols and abbreviations, references and addresses, further readings, and indexes of names, items, and topics. Crystal, a linguist, is the compiler of many reference books published by Cambridge, for example, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (1987).

Throughout the book (which focuses on British English, not American English), readers will find liberal use of color in the many charts, illustrations, reprints of pages from historically significant works, maps, and photographs. The author does not shrink from exploring and delivering opinions on controversial topics such as the “opaque inspecific, or empty” language of politics and the dangers of “political correctness.”

Each segment can be read as if it were the only section of the book, or, the work can be read cover to cover so that a cumulative effect is achieved. The only comparable resource that provides the same type of broad-ranging coverage in one volume is *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* [RBB O 15 92]. That work is arranged alphabetically within 22 themes (e.g., geography, history, media) and provides “an interim report on the nature and use of the English language” in all nations that speak English. The two works complement each other; Cambridge provides historical perspective and Oxford a snapshot of current English. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* lives up to the reputation of other resources published under the Cambridge imprint and will make an excellent addition to the collections of large public libraries and all academic libraries.

Book Details

- Hardcover: 489 pages
- Publisher: Cambridge University Press (May 26, 1995)
- Language: English
- ISBN-10: 0521401798
- ISBN-13: 978-0521401791
- Price: \$29.95

Customer Reviews

“Adelie” (Grass Valley, CA, USA)

This is essentially a “twofer” review – everything I say about this book also applies to Crystal’s “Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language.”

I fell in love with language long ago, so pounced on this book when it first appeared on my horizon several years ago. Since then, I have learned to keep it close by – it migrates from the coffee table to my night table to the bathroom to the breakfast table – I need it handy. I refer to it constantly, and often find myself opening it at random and immediately being hooked by whatever subject comes up.

It’s a tremendous compendium of easily accessible information on all aspects of the English language, and there are nuggets of value throughout. It is well-written in a lively, non-pedantic style, and has plenty of illustrations to reinforce understanding and make it more interesting. It’s appropriate for most ages except very young children, and is a terrific way to introduce anyone to the wonders and mysteries of our language.

The same remarks hold true for Crystal’s “Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language.” That work is presented in the same way, but with much a broader scope – it covers all aspects of human language. I like to browse in it and then get greater detail from the English Language book – they work very well together.

I’m in awe of Crystal’s ability to present such huge subjects so coherently and in such a comprehensive and fascinating way.

I strongly recommend both books, for you or for anyone you care about.

M. Rittman (PA)

Crystal's *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* is not really the type of book I would use for reference. There are much more appropriate books when I want to learn about the proper use of a gerund. This is, however, an absolutely fascinating and addictive book! It is the type of book I pick up to read and get so involved I lose track of time. It is also a beautiful book. The color, illustrations, and publishing quality are magnificent!

The focus of this book is not American English. The flavor is cosmopolitan. Questions are answered like how the variations of English in New Zealand and the Caribbean affect road signs. If you ever wanted to know how morphological, lexical, syntactic, and discourse humor compare and contrast, this book is for you. This encyclopedia also features a brilliantly edited collection of poems interspersed in the pages. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* will remain one of my favorite books.

Chris Crawford (Oregon USA)

David Crystal impresses me with his combination of elegant erudition, intellectual open-mindedness, and conciseness. In writing this book, he imposed a harsh constraint upon his writing: every topic had to fit into a two-page spread. The result is insidiously like potato chips: it's such an easy read, you can't help but reading "just one more spread".

The breadth of knowledge that he brings to bear on the subject is astounding; his bibliography reads like a catalog of Western intellectual history. Time and again, I found myself marking a point with a note to delve into the matter more deeply.

Intellectual integrity is another impressive component of his writing. He cheerfully acknowledges difficult issues and treats linguistic variation with respect, yet never descends into cover-your-ass academic frippery. The effect is to provoke deeper contemplation in the mind of the reader; language truly is endlessly complex!

A confession is in order here: I did find the last few score pages rather tedious. Perhaps it was merely the fatigue arising from my breathless rush through the first 400 pages; more likely the subject matter does not suit my tastes. But in a grand

parade of ideas of this size, I cannot complain if a few floats or marching bands fail to excite me; there's more than enough here to keep anybody dazzled.

The greatest tribute to this book that I can offer is the revelation that I have been too reluctant to shelve this book in my library; it remains on my desk, bedstand, or next to the computer, ready for a quick re-read of some random topic.

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Blog of the Week: huffenglish.com

Hi friends, huffenglish.com is the blog of the week for issue #36.

Dana Huff runs huffenglish.com. The tag line of huffenglish.com is “Issues, ideas, and discussion in English Education and Technology”. Dana teaches 9-12th grade English and a 10th grade Writing Seminar at the Weber School, a private Jewish high school in the Atlanta metro-area. She has been teaching since 1997; She taught middle school Language Arts and Journalism for two years and pre-K for one year and all the rest have been high school English.

At huffenglish.com Dana writes on Professional Development, Assessment, Technology in Teaching, Teaching Literature, Grammar and Writing, and more.

Dana's blog posts are comprehensive and well thought.

Here's what some of Dana's readers say:

Mrs. Allison Siddens

Mrs. Huff,

Thank you for sharing your thorough, well-organized, thought-provoking work! I am teaching American Literature for the first time this year and feel grateful to have stumbled upon your website. Your insightful connections and ideas for student projects improve my outlook (and my confidence) in teaching the same material.

I have never “blogged” or responded to any website prior to this submission, but I feel compelled to say, “Thank you!” I appreciate you sharing your work for the betterment of students, parents, teachers, and life-long learners!

Tina Jones

I just want to thank you for posting your work. I used your Great Gatsby Treasure Hunt with my eleventh grade American Lit class I they really enjoyed it.

I am working to use more and more technology with my students. I am excited to use new approaches of teaching. I think I get a little further with teenagers when I enter their world of technology.

Emily Harp

Mrs. Huff,

Thank you so much for your site! I love it and plan on using it next year. I just graduated from Auburn University, and I'll be teaching 8th grade English! I'm nervous, but I'm excited. Sites like yours help me feel a little bit better!

I think this much is enough about this wonderful treasure Dona has been maintaining.

[huffenglish.com](http://www.huffenglish.com) is a site that would provide several ideas to ELT teachers and enrich them.

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- 2. Abstracts:** An abstract in approximately 200 words should assist the article.
- 3. Abbreviations:** No stops are needed between capitals e.g. ELT, IELTS.
- 4. Figures and Tables:** Tables should be numbered sequentially with Arabic numerals.
- 5. Notes:** Notes should be consecutively numbered and presented at the foot of the page.
- 6. References:** References in the text should follow the author-date system. The complete reference list should be given at the end of the article. They should be in alphabetical order.
- 7. Book Reviews:** Book reviews must contain the name of the author and title / subtitle of the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher and date of publication.
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This is what our readers say:

Dear Tarun and team, its really great that you all are putting great effort to have a weekly almost regularly. The articles published are of contemporary relevance and without the monotony. Wish you all the best. – **MUKESH MODI**

ELT Weekly is doing a wonderful job by bringing people together and by promoting the cause of ELT. All kudos for the team of ELT Weekly. – **DR. RAVI BHUSHAN**

Yesterday while i was searching for ELT journals i saw ELTWeekly, after went through #29th issue i realized that i missed a lot without seeing the Weekly. Any how it is a tool to give valuable information of language learners and research scholars. I thank to Patel for facilitating this weekly. I request patil to display information about monthly, quarterly and half yearly journals details. -
DASHARATHAM

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